

NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

TRAVELLER

SUBSCRIBE ONLINE TODAY!
10 ISSUES FOR JUST £25

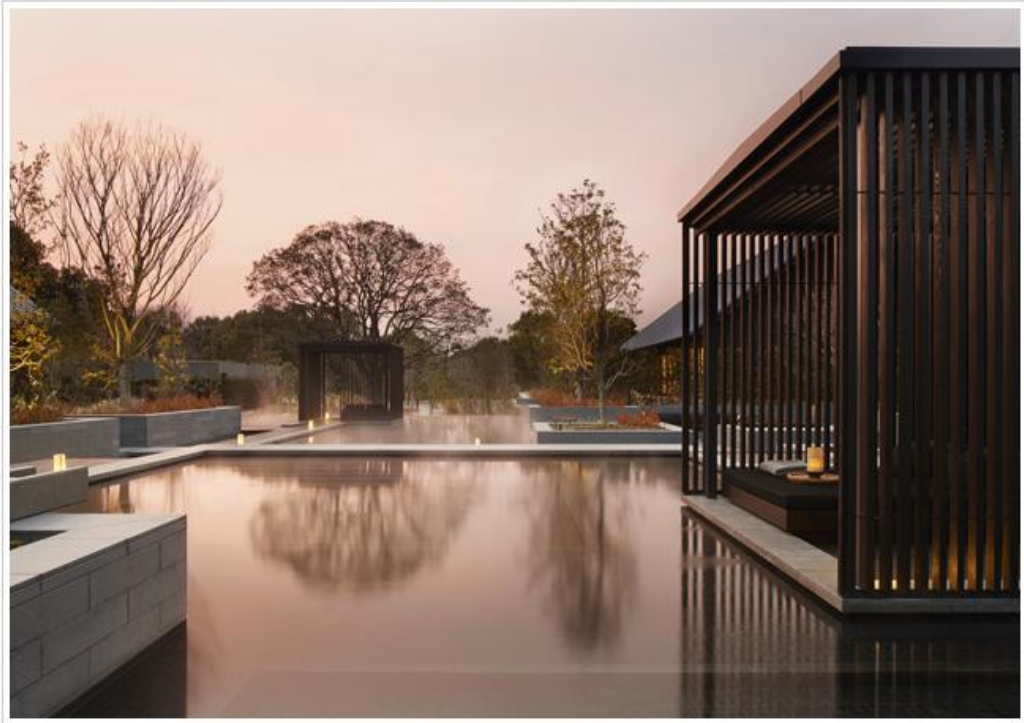


[DESTINATIONS »](#) [SMART TRAVEL »](#) [FAMILY](#) [PHOTOGRAPHY »](#) [WIN »](#) [EVENTS »](#) [THE COLLECTION](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#)

[Home](#) / [Big Sleep Awards 2017](#)



Come on in, set down your suitcase and join us as we salute the taste-makers and game-changers of the hotel world. Welcome to the first Big Sleep Awards! With the help of our readers and a panel of judges, we've selected the cream of the accommodation crop.



Spoilt rotten

Who doesn't love a spa? But with so many retreats about these days, we've come to expect a bit more. We want to melt into the massage table, dissolve our worries in the whirlpool, and maybe even eat vegan for a week.

The winner

Amanemu, Japan — An immaculate, thermal water-fed, five-star resort where minimalism equals maximum R&R.

Our panel said: Amanemu's tranquillity zone is based around the *onsen*, an ancient Japanese bathing tradition. Stone baths are fed by mineral-rich, salt-infused water from thermal springs. There's also a heated outdoor swimming spot overlooking Ago Bay.

The runners-up

Keemala, Phuket

With its treehouses, freeform swimming pool and Andaman Sea views, this fairytale-pretty retreat was made for a holistic holiday.

Four Seasons Resort Langkawi

This Malaysian resort, where service extends beyond expectations, defines luxurious living.



Castaway

We are casting our net for beachfront villas and resorts, private islands, stilt huts and floating boatels. If it's tropical and waterfront, we want to hear about it.

The winner

Cempedak Private Island, Indonesia — A remote island retreat where luxe facilities don't exclude sustainable sensibilities.

Our panel said: A brand-new private island resort, Cempedak's 20 boomerang-shaped pool villas have been fashioned almost entirely from bamboo, while the (fantastic) restaurant sources the majority of its ingredients from nearby traders. Two-and-a-half hours from Singapore, this is a real retreat, where luxury comes with determined eco-sensibility, sustainable building, local staffing and conservation management.

The runners-up

Milaidhoo, Maldives

The Maldives isn't short of luxurious overwater villas, but this new resort's 30 overwater suites set a new design standard.

Le Barthélemy, St Barts

A chic, beachfront hotel with a legendary restaurant, on a prime stretch of St Barts sand: a Caribbean hideaway with French panache.

Hometown hero

Which hotels give as much as they take, and then give some more? We want to reward hotel ventures with the community in mind when growing their product. At National Geographic Traveller (UK), we salute social impact schemes.

The winner

Gaia Oasis, Bali — A perfect little wellness retreat set beachfront in Bali's verdant north.

Our panel said: Nestled between the charcoal-black sands of Pantai Beach and the Abasan Mountains, this distinctly Balinese wellness retreat — all thatched-roof cottages, breezy yoga pavilions, swimming pools and even a resident ghost — puts the majority of its profits to supporting local causes such as free school meals and coral restoration.

The runners-up

Skwachàys Lodge, Vancouver

Owned by the Vancouver Native Housing Society, and with an indigenous art gallery downstairs, the artists who live in the building designed the rooms.

Mashpi Lodge, Ecuador

By employing 80% of its staff from the local community, this lodge provides villagers with an alternative source of income to logging.



Design den

Luxury treehouses. Underwater suites. It's amazing what architects can dream up. We love the experimental, but we also love pure class. These hotels are visually bewitching.

The winner

Treehotel, Sweden — A real architectural adventure in Lapland, great for design denizens and big outdoors fans.

Our panel said: A pioneering architectural experiment in Swedish Lapland that's both a novelty and an exemplary hotel experience. Each treehouse is uniquely designed by a different architect, an ongoing project that's seen fantastical additions every few years: from a mirror glass cube to a giant bird's nest, a flying saucer to a cantilevered cabin — an eco-conscious ethic underpins all.

The runners-up

Mar Adentro, Mexico

A white futuristic hotel 'floating' on the shore of Baja California; 110 rooms surrounded by faux canals and saltwater pools, designed by Mexican Miguel Ángel Aragonés.

Il Sereno, Lake Como

Centred around a lakefront infinity pool, natural building materials let the Como scenery shine.



On the money

Great value. It's one of our favourite things. We're looking for rooms under £150 worthy of a queen (a very high-maintenance queen).

The winner

Linnen, Berlin — This small, boutique-style inn is high on design, low on cost and is the epitome of salvaged, pre-loved style.

Our panel said: If ever there was proof that style needn't cost the earth, Linnen is it. The owners are passionate about interior design, and every one of the spacious rooms at their chic Prenzlauer Berg B&B is furnished with an eclectic mix of vintage furniture and bespoke pieces. The en suites are just as appealing, with Turkish limestones tiles and rainshowers, and everywhere you look there are stunning original features, like the grand spiral staircase that leads to the laid-back cafe-bar. It's hard to believe you get all this for well under £150 a night.

The runners-up

Zening, Cyprus

Almost every room has an idyllic view at this wellness resort perched over Chrysochous Bay in quiet Latchi, bordering the Akamas Peninsula National Park.

Pensao Agricola, Portugal

This Algarve farmhouse is that best of finds: a lovely small hotel with beautiful rooms, good food and great value rates.



Game changer

This is the category for the hotel innovators: the business brains revolutionising service, tech and design. Community spaces, rooftop bars that buzz, battle-tested wi-fi and brilliant renovations. Chameleon-like rebranding.

The winner

Zoku, Amsterdam — Look no further than this multi-tasking apart-hotel for all your needs, from business meetings to bedding down at bargain prices.

Our panel said: Part hotel, part apartment, Zoku is catering for the urban nomad who can bed down for a night as easily as set up residence for weeks. Zoku's ingenious guest room allows multifunctionality at a very high level. Below you, is that a lounge or meeting room? Knock up a snack in your kitchen or take advantage of the tempting offers in the top-floor public areas where community is king. Expect to see more of Zoku as redundant office space is repurposed.

The runners-up

1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge, NYC

Touted as New York's greenest hotel, copious vegetation offsets the reclaimed materials used in its design.

Green Rooms, London

The UK's 'first arts hotel', this social enterprise in an old art deco showroom has affordable rooms in an inspiring setting.



Green goddess

A hotel's environmental credentials can be a deal-breaker. Is it sustainable? Does it engage in animal rehabilitation? These hotels live and breathe the natural world.

The winner

Saruni Rhino, Kenya — A cosy safari camp dedicated to conservation.

Our panel said: Saruni Rhino is the basecamp for Sera Rhino Sanctuary, which is owned by the local community and is the only place in East Africa where you can track black rhinos on foot. It benefits not just the sanctuary's population of rhinos and elephants, but also the local community which receives 40% of its revenue, and provides all the sanctuary's excellent staff.

[Read more about it in the latest issue.](#)

The runners-up

Ermito, Umbria

Well water, vegetarian food from the organic garden, and evening illuminations mostly provided by candles in this monastery-style retreat in Umbria.

Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel, Peru

This cloud forest retreat has been blazing a trail for eco-tourism since the phrase was coined.



The Big Hotel

Properties in this category are the grande dames of the hotel world. Venerable. Classy. Established. They could be one-off, big-name hotels or a branch of a chain whose reputation transcends that of its umbrella company. Think Raffles.

The winner

Gritti Palace, Venice — The go-to palazzo in Italy's north has the VIP spot on the Grand Canal.

Our panel said: The sumptuous Gritti has it all: history (it's a 15th-century building); location (overlooking the Salute church at the mouth of the Grand Canal); and creature comforts, thanks to a £30m renovation in 2013. The cantilevered terrace is unbeatable.

The runners-up

Mandarin Oriental Bangkok

This historic Thai property still outshines them all with white-gloved glamour and stylish rooms.

Royal Mansour, Morocco

Guests have their own private residence within a labyrinth of gardens.



People power

Until robot butlers and electronic concierges take over, we think dedicated staff make a great hotel stay. We'd like to reward the hotel with talent that goes above and beyond.

The winner

Hotel Tresanton, Cornwall — Old-fashioned, no-nonsense British service reigns supreme at this former yachting club, transformed into a fashionista-favoured hotel.

Our panel said: This St Mawes hotel gives good old-fashioned service. From the charming barman to the smiling head of housekeeping, every member of staff makes guests feel like old friends. It's why we spend our family Christmas there each year — who can argue with stockings packed with handpicked gifts left on your door?

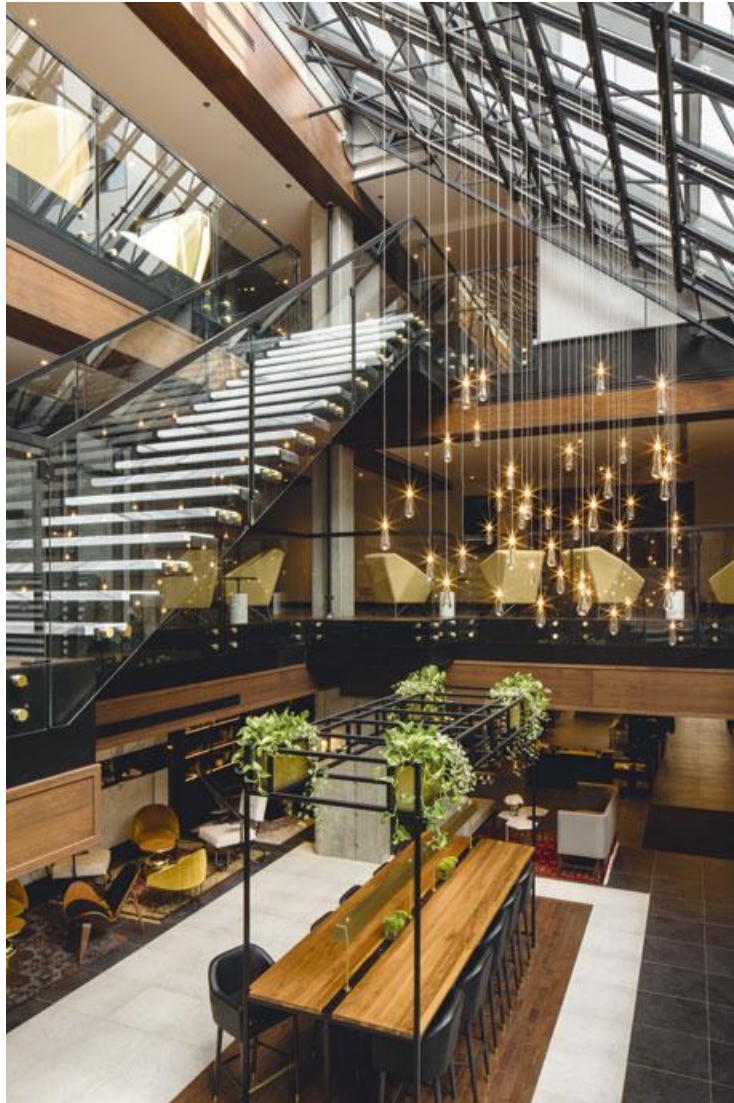
The runners-up

Alila Ubud, Bali

The chef popped over at breakfast with the recipe for his pineapple, mint and star anise marmalade — I still use it today.

Capella Lodge, Australia

Capella feels special because so much happens without you noticing, and the staff chat freely without it ever feeling like they're intruding.



New girl

Recognising the brightest, brashest city hotel; a property that's opened in the past two years. This new kid on the block could be a standalone venture or a new chain opening, but must have bags of style and comfort.

The winner

William Gray, Montreal — A spanking new 127-room boutique hotel in Montreal's historic Old Town.

Our panel said: Often eclipsed by its shouty New York neighbour, Montreal retains a certain off-the-radar cool. And the latest hotel opening is exemplary: effortlessly avant-garde and old world at the same time. Two 18th-century mansions have been linked together by an eight-storey glass tower, all raw concrete and leather inside, populated by staff that are as hipster as they are helpful. Spa and pool opening summer 2017.

The runners-up

Hotel Vagabond, Singapore

The antithesis of Singapore's skyscraper hotels, this 41-room boutique hotel is tucked away on the edge of Little India.

No. 15 Great Pulteney, Bath

Widely acclaimed as Bath's best boutique hotel, these three adjoining townhouses combine into a work of seductive art.



Gourmet getaway

These days, hotels are on the frontline of the foodie revolution. Which has the finest kitchen and culinary concept? The most innovative chef and the freshest ingredients? The taster menu to end all taster menus?

The winner

Babylonstoren, South Africa — A historic Dutch farmstead that's one of the best preserved in the Cape; these people know their onions... along with tea, wine, fresh produce, local meat and so much more.

Our panel said: Babylonstoren in South Africa is utter paradise for a foodie. The Farm Hotel is a visually stunning property, and is surrounded by eight acres of gardens. With a prickly pear maze and indigenous plants, literally everything you eat is around you. Its farm-to-fork philosophy guides the menu choices — a simple case of 'pick, clean and serve'. Every meal is nothing short of fresh, generous and completely delicious. Babel restaurant is outstanding.

The runners-up

The Forest Side, Lake District

The food is great at this stylish new hotel on the edge of Grasmere, with wonderful nearby walks. The chef, Kevin Tickle, with Michelin ambitions, serves exquisite little dishes.

The Old Clare, Sydney

This boasts world-class chefs: Kensington Street Social with Michelin-starred Jason Atherton and Automata with Clayton Wells.



Family favourite

This place treats your little ones like infant royalty, but remembers to also cater to adults. Are there activities and facilities to make even the most truculent of teens express gratitude?

The winner

Forest Holidays, Sherwood Forest — The great outdoors reigns supreme, even when it rains, at these well-appointed woodland cabins and treehouses.

Our panel said: A winner for outdoors-loving families. Choose from plush cabins (most with terrace hot tubs), or cool treehouses, with from-the-doorstep bike and hike trails through acres of woodland, once home to the legendary Robin Hood. Practise archery, explore the flora and fauna with a Forest Ranger, and pimp the camping experience with an in-cabin spa treatment or personal chef.

The runners-up

Soneva Fushi, Maldives

This resort is a dream escape for all ages. Kids are treated to bespoke menus and spa sessions, treasure hunts and cooking classes.

Schlosshotel Fiss, Austria

Five-star without the fuss. A dedicated family spa, swim in/out pool with an Alps backdrop, ski in/out during the winter and bike in/out in the summer.

Happy Glampers

Log cabins. Yurts. Gers. Teepees. Safari tents. Treehouses. Upcycled horseboxes. Airstream trailers. What's the coolest, quirkiest outdoor glamping experience out there?

The winner

The Bush Rover Company, Tanzania — To stay or to go safari? Do both with this pioneering roving vehicle-cum-tented-hotel.

Our panel said: The Bush Rover Company in Tanzania turns Land Rovers into movable, plush, fold-out safari accommodation.

The runners-up

Whitepod, Switzerland

Perched above the Rhone Valley, its 15 eco-pods are covered with white in winter and green in summer to blend into the scenery.

Fforest, Wales

A collection of beautifully-appointed accommodation in various coast and Welsh countryside locations.



Love shack

Time to fall in love again? We're looking for the kind of hotel that whispers 'romance', such as couples' hammocks, honeymoon suites and balconies worthy of Romeo and Juliet.

The winner

Padstow Townhouse, Cornwall — A celebrity chef-owned hideaway hotel set in an ivy-clad 17th-century building near Padstow's happening harbour.

Our panel said: Stylish rooms and Champagne on tap make this spot perfect.

The runners-up

Lizard Island, Australia

Lizard Island on the Great Barrier Reef is so secluded it feels like you're the only ones there.

Helena Bay, New Zealand

Set amid the beauty of the Poor Knights Islands, this newcomer comes with a retreat-like vibe and private villa suites.

Boutique break

Small and unique, boutique hotels have a special place in our hearts. These are the Fabergé eggs of accommodation: the devil's in the detail (and, perhaps, the top-notch service).

The winner

Le Roch Hotel & Spa, Paris — An extremely luxurious home from home right in the heart of the 1st arrondissement.

Our panel said: We recently went on a whirlwind trip to Paris and stayed at Le Roch Hotel & Spa — this 37-room property is a true boutique gem. The interiors were designed by the oracle that is Sarah Lavoine and the restaurant menu was created by Michelin-starred chef Arnaud Faye. Not only is it in the perfect spot for exploring the city, but you can easily escape the bustle too: the hotel has a beautiful library with a roaring fire and a stunning indoor pool with a hidden hammam.

The runners-up

The Painswick, Gloucestershire

Stylish cocktail bar, well-designed lounges, 'destination' restaurant, spa treatment rooms and 16 sumptuous rooms.

Borgo Santo Pietro, Tuscany

Everything at this opulent yet informal country hideaway is tailored towards relaxation and romance, from the pool and spa, to the exquisite Michelin-starred food.



Hangout

If you were a local, you'd come to this hotel's bar just for larks — it does snazzy cocktails and the DJ on a Friday spins a mean remix. Or, its communal lounge, where the wi-fi is super-strength and the sofas super-plush. Shoot pool, down tequila, or beat strangers at foosball: it's all going on here.

The winner

Freehand Miami — If you want eclectic, innovative design, great South Beach cocktails and a lively local (celebrity) scene, this is the place.

Our panel said: A slice of mid-century Americana — low-rise, floral wallpaper, string of bare lightbulbs — this offbeat hostel-hotel, a block from South Beach, has become something of a haunt for artists and actors. The restaurant and bar are two of the coolest stomping grounds in town.

The runners-up

The Principle, Manchester

A £25m revamp of the old Palace Hotel. There's a massive bar with DJs and tapas.

Ace Hotel, London

Without doubt a very cool place to hang out, with DJs in the main bar. Meanwhile, the downstairs club attracts top live acts.



Comeback kid

Revamps. Rebrands. Refurbs. Here's to the hotels that took a long, hard look in the mirror and said, it's time for a change. But, big makeovers can often go awry. These hotels did it just right — the results speak for themselves.

The winner

Pulitzer Amsterdam — Reopened last summer, following a total redesign, this collection of characterful canal houses now mixes sophisticated design with sumptuous golden age decor.

Our panel said: Freed from its modernist trappings, the Pulitzer Amsterdam now sings with sumptuous colours, plush fabrics and antique flourishes worthy of a Vermeer painting. Designer Jacu Strauss, responsible for London's stylish Sea Containers, spent a year living in the hotel during the design process. The result: the 225 guest rooms are uniquely furnished according to size and character.

The runners-up

Ritz Paris

Four years and £155m later, Paris' storied Ritz reopened in June 2016, modernised and refreshed to rival Versailles.

Peninsula Beijing

When it opened its doors in February, the Peninsula Beijing unveiled bigger rooms, plus bags of Chinese tech and design. beijing.peninsula.com

THE READERS' CATEGORIES



Eurostar

You've not felt this rested in years. Perhaps you're back from an idle day at the beach or some rigorous sightseeing. This is your break on the continent and your accommodation has surpassed expectation. Tell us more...

The winner

Belmond Reid's Palace, Madeira — With its grand colonial architecture, ocean-view pools and lavish dinner dances, Belmond Reid's Palace has always attracted Madeira's most discerning travellers — Churchill even wrote his war memoirs here.

Readers said: "Location, old-fashioned elegance and a lovely, relaxed atmosphere."

"Comfort, old-world charm and outstanding service."

"The location of this hotel is breathtaking."

The runners-up

Le Bristol Paris

Opened in 1925, the distinguished Le Bristol is one of only a handful of hotels in Paris awarded official 'palace' status (a notch up from five stars).

Arlberg 1800 Resort, St Christoph

Also known as the Arlberg Hospiz, this traditional, family-run resort is one of the grand dames of Alpine ski hotels.

Home from home

The staycation. The great British break. Be it a cosy cabin outside Cardiff, a boutique boudoir in Belfast or an Edinburgh hotel oozing with elan, who deserves a medal?

The winner

Atlantic Hotel, Jersey — Breathtaking views and fine dining make this family-run, 1930s-inspired coastal hideaway the perfect choice for a relaxing break.

Readers said: "Superb clifftop location overlooking a five-mile sandy beach, family-owned with very personal level of service and a Michelin-starred restaurant."

"Waking up to the sound of waves and far-stretching views over the sea was magical. The level of service was outstanding, from remembering how I took my coffee to offering the best places to visit on the island. It was a wonderful experience."

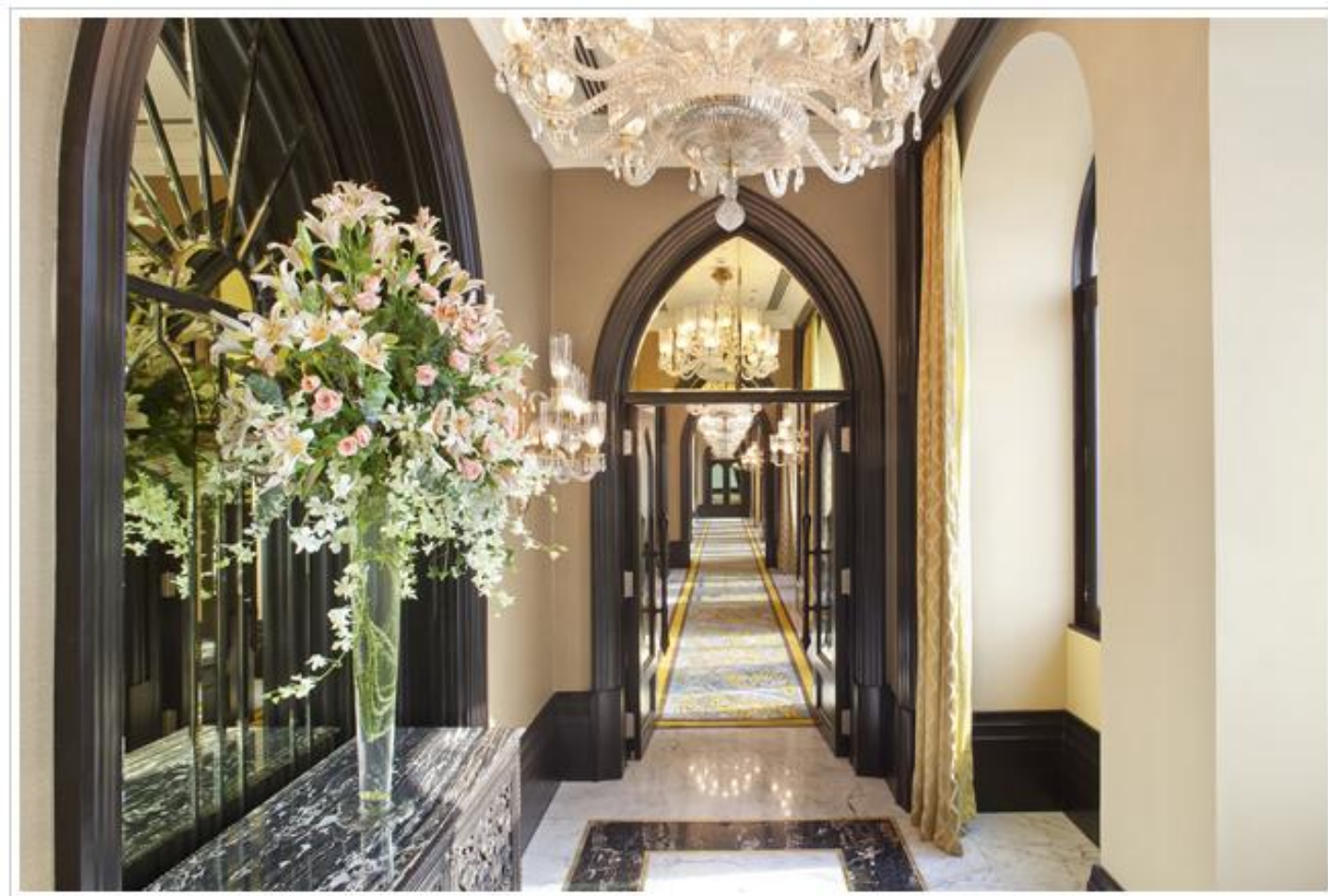
The runners-up

Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, Oxfordshire

This hotel offers one of Britain's finest gastronomic experiences courtesy of the Raymond Blanc Cookery School.

Coul House Hotel, Contin, Scotland

The Mackenzies of Coul picked a handsome hilltop location for this country house hotel, built in 1821.



Far-flung fancy

Excellence comes in many guises, but stand-out hotel stays linger in the mind. They're the stuff of office daydreams; they fired up your imagination and coddled you with comfort. The style, ethos, food — this hotel was the Cullinan Diamond in the crown of your long-haul trip.

The winner

Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai — A monument to the opulent tastes of the Raj era, this lavish hotel stands in the heart of frenetic Mumbai overlooking the Arabian Sea, boasting bags of history and famously splendid service.

Readers said: “Full of grand decadent elegance. Fantastic service.”

“Great location, fantastic food and first-class service.”

“Loved arriving after a long flight; felt part of a rich history and was looked after like a Maharaja.”

The runners-up

Layana Resort, Ko Lanta

A desert island paradise, this elegant resort offers the very best of Thai culture, modern luxury and a highly-rated spa.

Sabi Sabi Game Reserve, South Africa

An award-winning private game reserve with four luxury safari lodges and top wildlife encounters.

The judging panel

Tom Chesshyre

Travel writer, [The Times](#)

Sam Mullen

Head of product and partnerships, [Quintessentially Travel](#)

Julia Buckley

Freelance travel writer

David Whitley

Freelance travel writer

Lee Cobaj

Freelance travel writer

Nikki Tinto

Co-founder, [i-escape](#)

Guy Dittrich

Editor-at-large, [Sleeper Magazine](#)

Pippa Jacks

Group editor, [Travel Trade Gazette](#)

James & Tamara Lohan

Founders, [Mr & Mrs Smith](#)

Plus, all of your favourites from the *National Geographic Traveller* (UK) team.

Have we missed our your favourite? Tell us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

Published in the Jul/Aug 2017 issue of National Geographic Traveller (UK)

SUBSCRIBE NOW >>



[HOME](#) • [ABOUT](#) • [MAGAZINE](#) • [ADVERTISE](#) • [CONTACT](#) • [PRIVACY POLICY](#) • [TERMS & CONDITIONS](#) • [SUBSCRIBE](#)



Copyright © APL Media Limited 2017. All rights reserved. Company no: 3393234. VAT: 701391176. Registered Office: 30 City Road, London EC1Y 2AB.